Good Deeds done for God's House.

OR, A

SERMON

Preached on the Occasion of the Death of

Dr. Jeremiah Butt,

One of the Physicians appointed for

Their Majesties FLEET.

By *ED. VEAL.*

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TO THE

READERS,

Thoſe eſpecially that heard the following Sermon, and were Authors of its Publication.

WHatever Apology *may be needful to others for Publiſhing this Plain Diſcourſe* (*which perhaps will never have ſo many* Readers *as it had* Hearers) *there needs none to be made to you, whoſe Requeſt only brought it to light, which otherwiſe it ſhould never have ſeen. It is, I confeſs, long in coming, but I never promiſed a quick diſpatch of it, well knowing that my other occaſions* (*and ſomething with Relation to the Publick*) *would inevitably retard it; which accordingly fell out, ſo that I had not time to review my Notes till a few Weeks ago, and then my weak Eyes, and ſlow Hand, encreaſing the Drudgery of Tranſcribing, gave it a further hinderance. But, ſuch as it is, now at laſt you have it; no more mine but your own; and you, for ought I know, muſt be reſponſible for its defects. For my part, I ſhall anſwer for nothing but the deſign of it, and ſhall only ſay,* it was well meant, *and wiſh the hearts of others*

may

may be as warmly affected in Reading, as I perſwade my ſelf yours were at the Preaching of it. As for the occaſion of it, you are well enough acquainted with it. Thoſe that are not, may be pleaſed to take this Brief Account. Dr. Jeremiah Butt *(one of the Phyſitians recommended by the Colledge to the Commiſſioners of the Admiralty, and by them appointed to attend Their Majeſties Service in the Fleet) being a Perſon of great Integrity, Fervency, and Zeal for God, thought himſelf concern'd for the Health of his Patients Souls, as well as Bodies, which he therefore uſually laboured to procure by wholeſome Counſel and Inſtruction where he ſaw it needful. Being on Board the Fleet, he did frequently and boldly, tho with equal Fairneſs and Modeſty, reprove the Profaneneſs and Licentiouſneſs he found among that rugged ſort of Men with whom his Buſineſs lay; and this he did, as I am credibly informed, not without good effect. When he was at home, he did like another* Lot, vex his righteous Soul *with the filthy Converſation of a wicked and lewd Neighbourhood; and joyning with other Good men in the Adjacent parts of the Suburbs, and ſeveral Worthy Citizens of* London, *he made it moſt of his Buſineſs to ſtir up the Officers of divers Pariſhes to attempt the ſuppreſſing the Naughtineſs he ſaw among that kind of People, by executing the Laws againſt Profaneneſs and Debauchery, upon them. In this ſo laudable an Undertaking, he and his aſſociated Friends had the Aſſiſtance of divers* Middleſex *Juſtices, a Noble Lord at the* Tower, *the Lord Mayor, and other Magiſtrates in* London, *and were encouraged by ſome of the Right Reverend the Biſhops, and Reverend Judges, whom they acquainted with their Deſign, which ſavoured of no Faction or Party, but was only levelled againſt thoſe Vices which*

which true Christians of all Perswasions abhor, as the bane of good Manners, and reproach of Religion, as may in part be seen in one or two Printed Papers *by him and the rest published.*

The success of this Undertaking hath been found by a loose Generation to their cost, and by Honest men to their comfort; and it is to be hoped more will be, when it shall please God to pour down more of a Spirit *of Courage and Zeal upon other private Christians, as well as Magistrates, for the promoting so good a Work, so happily begun. About* March *last it pleased him,* in whose hands our Breath is, *to call home his faithful Servant,* Dr. Butt, *to himself. When being desir'd to Preach on that Occasion, I resolved to wave the Formality of a Funeral Sermon, and instead of expatiating in the deserved Commendation of the Deceased, wholly to address my self to those that Survive, and try if I might possibly provoke some other to stand up in his Spirit, and fill up his Place, and be alike Vigorous and Active in the same Work, and with the like Mind. The Sermon was not calculated for the* Great *or Learned, but for a Company of plain Hearers, more considerable for the Integrity of their Hearts than Eminency in the World, and that count* Piety *their best* Quality. *Even such as those, tho but private Christians, may do good Service to the Publick, (as little Wheels may sometimes set the greater in Motion); tho they be not in Authority, they may humbly supplicate and call in the help of those that are, and who having Power in their hands, cannot easily refuse to punish Offenders, without incurring the hazard of being thought their Patrons. The Vices of the Times are our Common Enemies, which come upon us like Armed men, and every one hath a right to engage against them,*

and

and endeavour to repel them. If this Sermon may contribute towards the whetting the Courage, or kindling the Zeal of any ſo to do, I ſhall have my end in it; and that it may, and that God may ſucceed and proſper the endeavours of ſuch as are Active and Diligent already, ſhall be the Prayer of

Your Servant for Jeſus ſake

ED. VEAL.

NEHEM. XIII. 14.

Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the houſe of my God, and for the offices thereof.

THESE Words are an Ejaculatory Petition of *Nehemiah* (a Holy Courtier in a Profane Court) ſent up to Heaven, while making mention of the Good he had done for the Houſe of God. Such Parentheſes of Prayer we meet with ſometimes in other Sacred Writers. *Moſes* brings in *Jacob*, *Gen.* 49. in the midſt of his Patriarchal Benedictions, lifting up his heart in that Ejaculation, Verſe 18. *I have waited for thy ſalvation, O Lord.* The like ſeems to be that in *Mic.* 7. 14. *Feed thy flock with thy rod*, &c.

The deſign of *Nehemiah*'s Prayer, is to obtain God's gracious Acceptance of what he had done for God's Houſe. His Requeſt is expreſſed, firſt Poſitively, by way of *Apprecation*; then Negatively, by way of *Deprecation*; yet both to the ſame import.

1. Poſitively, *Remember me concerning this*, viz. which he had been doing, *V.* 11, 12, 13. So *V.* 22. *Remember me concerning this alſo*, &c. A twofold Remembrance we find aſcribed to God in Scripture.

1. *A remembrance in mercy*, and *for good*, as *V.* 22. and 31. and *Chap.* 5. 19. which implies God's Acceptance: So Pſalm 20. 3.

Remember all thine offerings, and accept thy burnt-ſacrifices, Heb. *turn to aſhes*; it being a Token of God's accepting a Sacrifice, when he ſent Fire from Heaven to conſume it, 2 *Chron.* 7. 1.

2. A remembring *in Wrath*, and for Judgment; ſo this Ch. v. 29. *Remember thou them, O my God, becauſe they have defiled the prieſthood.* And Pſalm 137. 7. *Remember the children of Edom*, &c. It is that remembring in Mercy beforementioned, in oppoſition to this, that *Nehemiah* here prays for.

2. Negatively, *Wipe not out my good deeds which I have done for the houſe of my God, and for the offices thereof.* It implies the ſame as the other. What men wipe or blot out (the *Hebrew* word is indifferently rendred by either) they forget, caſt off the thoughts of it, and make it be as if it had not been. It is an Alluſion to their writing down in their Books what they would remember, or blotting out what they would not have remembred. And it is ſometimes applied to Sin, which God is ſaid to blot out when he pardons it. Pſalm 51. 1. *Blot out my tranſgreſſions.* Iſaiah 43. 25. *I am he that bloteth out thy tranſgreſſions*; which is explained by the next words, *will not remember thy ſins.* Here it is applied to good Deeds, *wipe not out*, i. e. remember them, accept them, or remember them for good. Mens good Deeds, as well as evil, are in God's *Book*, Mal. 3. 16. *A book of remembrance was written for thoſe that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name.*

From the Words thus opened, three things chiefly offer themſelves to our Obſervation.

Obſ. 1. *God's Children ſhew their goodneſs eſpecially in doing good for God's houſe.*

2. *In all the good they do for God's houſe, his gracious acceptance is the great thing they aim at.*

3. *God's Children may upon good grounds, expect Gods remembring and accepting the good Deeds they do for his houſe.* What *Nehemiah* here prayed for, he prayed for in Faith, and no doubt expected an anſwer to his Prayer, in the acceptance of his good Deeds, according to the general Rule, 1 John 5. 14. *If*

we

we aſk any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And what ground he had for his Faith in expecting God's Acceptance, the ſame other Believers have that do the like. There is the ſame reaſon to look for Acceptance, as to pray for it; and what we cannot in Faith hope God will do for us, we cannot in Faith deſire he ſhould.

In ſpeaking to this Propoſition,

1. Something muſt be *explained.*
2. The Truth of the Propoſition *confirmed.*
3. Some *Application* made.

1. In the *Explication* of the Doctrine, three things are to be opened.

1. *What is to be underſtood by God's Houſe.* The Houſe immediately here underſtood, was, no doubt, the Temple of God at *Jeruſalem*, rebuilt after Seventy years Deſolation, by the *Jews* of the Captivity, under the Conduct of *Zerubbabel* and *Joſhua*, the High Prieſts, upon their return from *Babylon.* Yet we are not to underſtand by the *Houſe*, meerly the Walls and Material Building, but the Temple in its Relative State, as the Houſe of God choſen by him, and dedicated to him as the Place of his Solemn Worſhip, the Place where he had in a ſpecial manner *recorded his Name*, and where he was wont to manifeſt his gracious Preſence among that People, whom he had obliged to come thrice every year to Worſhip there, and where alone it was lawful for them to offer Sacrifices to him. *Nehemiah* adds what he had done for the *Offices* of God's Houſe. Some render the word, *Ceremonies*, others (as in the Margin) *Obſervations*, *viz.* to be uſed in the Temple, or things to be obſerved, and ſo it may well comprehend all that Service which was required of them there, and the Houſe is mentioned with reſpect to the Worſhip of God performed in it, and we may ſay, to the Worſhippers too; for them he puts in the like Petition, Chap. 5. 19. *Think upon me, O my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.*

Anſwerable to this, we may underſtand that which is called the Houſe and Temple of God in Goſpel-times, and that is

the Church of God, 1 Tim. 3. 15. Heb. 3. 6. *Chriſt as a ſon over his own houſe, whoſe houſe are we*; and Chap. 10. 21. and 2 Cor. 6. 16. *Ye are the temple of the Living God.* 1 Pet. 4. 17. Judgement is ſaid to begin at *the houſe of God*, *i. e.* the Church; the Apoſtle referring to *Ezek. 9. 6.* begin at my *Sanctuary*; the Material Sanctuary or Temple that then was, being a Type of *God's Houſe* or *Church* that now is. Sometimes particular Believers are ſaid to be the Temple of God, in reſpect of his Inhabitation by his Spirit in them, 1 *Cor. 6. 19.* and ſometimes the Church of Chriſt is eſpecially called an *Holy Temple*, not only in reſpect of God's dwelling in it, but of the Union of the ſeveral Parts (particular Saints) with Chriſt the Foundation, and with each other, *Eph. 2. 20, 21, 22.* And ſometimes Believers in particular, are called *lively Stones* (Parts and Materials of the Building); and the whole Body of them a *Spiritual Houſe*, 1 Pet. 2. 5. And as the *Old Teſtament* Temple had its *Offices* or *Obſervations*, (as in the Text) *viz.* all that Typical Worſhip God ordained for his People, till the *time of reformation*, Heb. 9. 10. So God's Spiritual Houſe or Temple, under the *New Teſtament*, hath its Service too, a Spiritual One, even the whole Worſhip of the Goſpel-Church, 1 Pet. 2. 5. *Spiritual Sacrifices.* Believers, God's Holy Prieſthood, offer up themſelves in the firſt place, *Rom.* 12. 1. and then all the other parts of *New Teſtament*-Worſhip, Prayer, Praiſe, *&c. Heb.* 13. 15. *Phil.* 4. 18. Indeed this Spiritual Houſe of God is the Seat and Receptacle of all thoſe Ordinances of Divine Service which he hath appointed under the Goſpel.

2. What is to be underſtood by *good Deeds done* for God's Houſe.

1. We are to conſider them as to the *matter of them*, or the things themſelves. In this Chapter we have an account of what *Nehemiah* did: He did in great part reform Religion, rectify Abuſes crept into it, and ſet in order things relating to God's Worſhip. He cauſed the mix'd Multitude to be ſeparated from *Iſrael*, *Ver.* 3. becauſe the *Moabites* and *Ammonites* (according to that Law, *Deut.* 23. 3.) were not to *come into the Congregation of God.* Then we find him caſting out *Tobiah*'s Goods from the

the Chamber that *Eliaſhib*, the Prieſt, had prepared for him in the Temple, *v.* 4. to *v.* 8. and cleanſing the Chamber, *v.* 9. Next he cauſeth the *Portions of the Levites and the Singers to be given them*, which had been for ſome time withheld, and which ſo diſcouraged them, that they were *fled to their own fields*, and the Houſe of God was *forſaken*, *v.* 10, 11, 12, 13. To thoſe and their Service in the Temple, he ſeems to have a particular reſpect, when in this Verſe he mentions the *Offices* of the Houſe. After this, we find him reforming the Abuſe of the Sabbath, *v.* 15, *&c.* of ſtrange Wives, *v.* 23, *&c.* and appointing the Wards of the Prieſts and Levites, *&c.* *v.* 30 31. All theſe were things relating to Religion, which yet *Nehemiah* (tho no Eccleſiaſtical Man, but the *Tirſhatha*, or Chief Civil Magiſtrate) look'd upon as belonging to his Province, and accordingly took care of them.

Proportionably to what he did then, good deeds done for God's Houſe now, are thoſe that are done for the Church of God, his Worſhip and Worſhippers as ſuch; the reſtoring of Religion when decayed, rectifying Abuſes in it, the Reformation of mens manners, puniſhing their Vices and Immoralities, the encouraging Miniſters, exerciſing Diſcipline in particular Churches, edifying even private perſons by inſtructing, counſelling, admoniſhing, exhorting, and comforting them; and ſo ſupplying their wants, relieving them in their Neceſſities, viſiting them in their Sickneſſes, bearing with their Infirmities, recalling them from their Wandrings, and all ſuch Offices of Love as belong to Chriſtians in their reſpective Capacities and Relations, and conduce to the promoting the common good of God's Spiritual Houſe, or the welfare and ſalvation of particular Believers, as parts of it.

2. As to the *Form of them*, which conſiſts in the right way and manner of doing them. Many things may be materially good, which formally are not ſo; it is one thing to do a Good deed, another to do it well. Here therefore we muſt look to the ordinary requiſites of Good works, and where they are found, there the acceptance of the works themſelvs may be expected. Works are then well done, and good in God's account,

1. When

1. When they are done *according to the rule of the Word*, ſuch as God's Commands direct to, not meerly ſuch as men deviſe of their own heads, or which their own fancies, it may be Superſtition prompt them to. Such may have ſometimes been the rich Ornaments wherewith the Places of Publick Worſhip have been deck'd, and coſtly Structures erected by the Prodigal, but miſguided Devotion of thoſe who have been more zealous for a Gaudy Religion than a Pure one, and for a Beautiful Building than for Spiritual Worſhip. Places and Times of Popery have abounded with things of this nature, which however admired and applauded by men, as *good Deeds done for God's houſe*, yet find little Acceptance with him.

2. When out of *right Principles*, Faith in Chriſt, (through whom alone they can be accepted) and Love to God, and the Souls of Men. God little regards what men do for his Houſe, tho with never ſo much Splendor, Profuſeneſs, Magnificence, (and much no doubt they may) if it be only on prudential Conſiderations, or out of corrupt and ſelfiſh Principles.

3. When for *right*, i.e. *Spiritual Ends*, the Glory of God, the furtherance of the Goſpel, and the Salvation of Souls. God will not accept of the otherwiſe greateſt works done for his Houſe, when either ſelf is the beginning of them, or ſelf is the end of them; and what men do, they do in pretence for God, but in reality for themſelves, (*Zech.* 7. 5, 6.) when they act in them, either that they may purchaſe the praiſe of men, *Matth.* 6. 2. or the favour of God. He that aims at merit, falls below acceptance; and while he thinks to oblige God by his Good deeds, he provokes him by his Pride.

3. *Who they are* that may on good grounds expect this Acceptance of what they do for God's Houſe. It was confined in the Doctrinal Propoſition to Believers, or God's Children; and that is evident, in as much as they only are capable of acting for God and his Houſe in the way and manner before declared. They only that have a Supernatural principle in them, can be acted by ſuch a Principle; where Faith or Love are not, men cannot act out of either. And there can be no right

right aiming at God's Glory, where there is no true Zeal for it.

2. On *what grounds* Believers doing good for God's Houſe in the manner deſcribed, may look for acceptance with him.

1. On the ſame *General grounds* whereon they may expect his accepting any good work they do in ſincerity, tho for themſelves, or for Strangers, or Enemies.

1. *The promiſes of God* to accept all the Duties of Obedience performed by them in a due manner. Such a promiſe, tho not always expreſſed, yet is always ſuppoſed and implied, as joyned to the Command. All Believers Spiritual Sacrifices, *come with acceptance on God's altar*, Iſaiah 60. 7. The Prophet points to Goſpel-times, and Goſpel-ſacrifices, tho under the Type of Levitical Ones; and *Peter* explains him when he tells us, that the *Spiritual Sacrifices* of Believers are *acceptable to God by Jeſus Chriſt*, 1 Pet. 2. 5. As *without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God*, Heb. 11. 6. ſo whatever is done in Faith, is pleaſing to him.

2. *The Death and Interceſſion of Chriſt procuring their acceptance*; the one by way of Purchaſe, the other by way of Application. As the perſons of the Saints, ſo their performances are *accepted in the beloved*, Eph. 1. 6. The Lord Jeſus Chriſt hath not only by his Death purchaſed for them Grace and Strength to ſerve God in a right manner, and according to his mind, but likewiſe the acceptance of ſuch their Services, and by his Interceſſion in the merit of his Death, makes them actually accepted.

3. The *Mercy as well as Truth of God*, in making them actually partakers of what Chriſt purchaſed for them, and God promiſed to them. Tho the fulfilling of every promiſe to Believers be an Act of Juſtice in God, with reſpect to the merits of Chriſt, yet it is meer mercy to themſelves that have no merit of their own. It is indeed an Act of Faithfulneſs and Truth in God to them, yet it is no leſs an Act of Mercy too; the Mercy that moved him to make promiſes, doth in conjunction with his Truth move him to fulfil them. The reward he gives at laſt, is given out of faithfulneſs, becauſe it is promiſed, yet it is

is no less given out of Grace, 1 Pet. 1. 13. *The grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* Jude 21. *Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life*; so 2 Tim. 1. 18. It is mercy too, out of which God overlooks the Infirmities which accompany the best works they do. And therefore there is no plea nor pretence for the merit of good works here, (as the Papists dream) when *ver.* 22. *Nehemiah* prays, even as to them, that God would *spare him*, and pleads not the *Goodness* of his *Works*, but the *Greatness* of God's *Mercy*, as the Fountain, from whence he expected both the pardon of his failings, and acceptance of his Services would be derived to him.

2. Some special reasons there are, on which Believers may expect the acceptance of what they *do for God's house.*

1. We find in the Scripture, *special notice taken of good deeds done for God's house*, and honourable mention made of those that did them. Of *Moses* it is said, That he was *faithful in all Gods's house*, Numb. 12. 7. And we have not only a large account of *David*'s Munificence, and the Prince's Bounty in contributing to the Building of the Temple, 1 *Chron.* 29. and *Solomon*'s afterward in erecting it, and so promoting the Worship of God; but we have other succeeding Kings, *Asa*, *Jehoshaphat*, *Hezekiah*, *Josiah*, commended for their reforming Religion when gone to decay, renewing Covenant with God, suppressing Idolatry, taking away Images, Groves, and High-places, opening the Temple which had been shut up, repairing its Breaches, cleansing its Filthiness, removing the *Sodomites*, commanding the People to seek the Lord, and appointing the Priests and Levites to instruct and teach them, 2 *Chron.* 14. 15, 17, 29, 30, 31. 34. and 35. *Chap.* And of *Jehojadah* the Priest, it is particularly recorded, that he was buried among the Kings, (the Lord so directing the Peoples hearts) *Because he had done good in Israel, both towards God, and towards his house*, 2 Chron. 24. 16. And to say nothing of *Joshua*, the High Priest, and *Zerubbabel*, and things done by them after the Captivity, we have in the *New Testament* an account of the Boldness, and Zeal, and indefatigable Industry of the Apostles and Primitive Preachers, in

in spreading the Gospel from House to House, from City to City, and from Country to Country, planting Churches, ordaining Officers, visiting the Disciples, making Collections for the Poor, &c. And if it be said, these were Great Men, Kings, Princes, Head men in the State, or Apostles, and extraordinary Officers in the Church: We shall likewise find the good done for God's House by more inferior and private Persons mentioned for their praise. *Exod.* 35. We have the willingness of the People upon record, as well as the Princes, in their Offerings, and not only the Crafts men (*Bezaleel* and *Aholiab*) mentioned as working, but even the Women spinning for the Service of the Tabernacle; and *Rom.* 16. not only *Gaius* I commended for his Hospitality, v. 23. but several Women that laboured in the Lord, v. 12. & 1. in the Service of Christ and his Church. And it is very remarkable, that into the Holy Ghost, the Inspirer of the Penmen of the Scripture, thought it to be by in silence many Miracles wrought by our Lord Jesus himself, *Joh.* 20. 30. and 21. 25. yet he hath recorded, and with no small mark of Honour, *the poor widow that not to her [illegible] into the Temple-treasury*, *Luke* 21. 2. 3. Now may we not from the particular mention and commendation of all these and others, infer the acceptableness of such works unto God? And may not that be a good ground for others that are Followers of them, to reckon upon the same acceptance they and their Works found with him?

2. We sometimes find God *rewarding good done for his house, tho not by good men*; and so not done in Faith, not out of Love to him, nor Zeal for his Glory, and which therefore had not the formality of good works. Thus *Jehu* was recompensed with his Childrens sitting upon the Throne to the Fourth Generation, because he had executed Judgment upon *Ahab*, a notorious Idolatrous King, and destroyed the worship of *Baal* brought in by him, 2 *Kings* 10. 30. Common rewards God frequently gives to those that do him common Service. Now, if he give temporal good things to those that do good for his House, tho not with a right heart; much more may those that do the like with better hearts, and in a gracious manner, expect the acceptance of their so doing.

3. The many *promises God makes to such as do good for his house.* As there be promises made in general to all the Duties of Obedience, and Acts of Righteousness; so there are promises made in special to such as are done for God's House. Matth. 10. 41, 42. *A cup of cold water* given to *a disciple in the name of a disciple*, or because he *belongs to Christ*, (as *Mark* 9. 41.) *shall not lose its reward. Gal.* 6. 9, 10. the promises of reaping in due season made to them, that as they have opportunity, do good to all men, affect them especially that do good to the *houshold of faith*, Heb. 6. 10. God will not forget any *labour of love shewed towards his name, in ministring to the saints.* And *Chap.* 13. 16. he is said to be *well pleased with them that do good and communicate*: And according to the Tenor of the promises, *Paul* assures the *Philippians*, Chap. 4. 18. that what relief they had sent him, was *an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God.*

4. The *good Affections* men have to the House of God are acceptable to him, and then the good *they do* as the Fruit of them cannot be otherwise. *Psalm* 122. 6. They shall *prosper that love* God's *Jerusalem.* A *willing mind* is accepted, tho ability be wanting, as 2 *Cor.* 8. 12. Or *opportunity*, *Phil.* 4. 10. Or hinderances interpose, 1 Thess. 2. 18. *Satan hindered Paul* from seeing them, yet his love and good will was no less acceptable to God. Nay, God himself hindred *David* from building the Temple, 1 *Kings* 8. 19. yet his good Affection to the work was kindly taken, Verse 18. *Thou didst well, that it was in thy heart.*

5. Doing good for God's House, is it *self a special gift of God*; it is he himself that gives men an heart for it, and they only do it to whom it is given, 1 *Chron.* 29. 13, 14. *David* praiseth the Lord, not only for the ability he had given him and the People, to offer so much towards the building of the Temple; but for grace to, and willingness to part with that for God's Service, which they had received from his hand; and *the unspeakable gift Paul* blessed God for, on behalf of the *Corinthians*, 2 *Cor.* 8. 15. is for ought I see, best understood of the *exceeding grace of God in them*, Verse 14. *viz.* in their *liberal distribution*, Verse 13. which was an evidence of their *professed subjection*

subjection to the gospel. Hence we may infer, that if good Deeds done for God's House are done by his Grace, well may they that do them, reckon upon the acceptance of them. Where he gives Grace to do, he accepts what is done.

6. Because *what is done for God's house, he looks upon as done for himself*, when done out of a sincere Respect to him. As what evil men do to God's House, or any part of it, he takes it as done to himself, they that *touch* his People, *touch the apple of his eye*, Zech. 2. 8. their evil Neighbours are *his evil Neighbours*, Jer. 12. 14. and they that persecute Saints, *persecute Christ*, Acts 9. 4. So likewise God takes any good done to them, as done to himself, *Matth.* 10. 40. Such is his love to his People, so near the Relation he admits them into, and so intimate their Conjunction with him, that what is done for or against them, he accepts or resents as for or against himself. How well do men take any kindness shown to a Wife, a Child, or Bosom Friend? God's love to his Church is infinitely more strong, fervent, tender, than men's can be to their nearest Relations, or dearest Friends; and then they need no more doubt of God's accepting what they do for it, than if their good Deeds could immediately reach himself.

Use 1. If Believers may reasonably expect God's graciously accepting their good Deeds done for his House, How blameworthy are they that are so cold and backward to do any? Can say little of any they have done? Tho they profess to be Friends to the House, Children in it, Parts of it, and such as are on all accounts engaged to do what they can for it; yet, alas! how unconcerned are they for its welfare; how little do they care how things go with it, and will not in the least help forward the Building, or Repairing, or Purging of it?

1. Some are *Idle*, *Slothful*, *Easeful*, will not take the Pains, or give themselves the trouble of doing any thing for God's House. They prefer Rest before Work, Ease before Service, and so far consult the quiet of their Lives,

as to neglect that usefulness which is the end of their Living.

2. Some are *timorous*, will not not do what they might for fear of Censures, or Scoffs, or Reproaches, of being counted Over-busy or Pragmatical. They are afraid of disgusting men, it may be Great Ones, Rulers, Magistrates; nay, it may be Friends, Relations, Customers, that are Guilty, and need Reproof; Ignorant, and need Instruction; Wandring, and need Reducing; Vicious, and need Restraint. Or they are afraid of the Opposition they may meet with from those that bear no good will to God's House; afraid of suffering by any means for doing their Duty. Their fear hath so much the ascendant of their Zeal, that a frown, an ill-look, an angry word checks their Mettle, and hinders all activeness, tho in never so just a Cause. They will rather incur the displeasure of God, than the wrath of men; and neglect his Service, than purchase, by doing it, the evil will of their Neighbours.

3. Some are *Selfish*, seek *their own* things so much, that they forget *the things of Christ*, Phil. 2. 21. either regarding them not at all, or postponing them to their own Affairs. They pretend they have Callings, and must not neglect them; they have Families, and must provide for them; they have not time, nor leasure (they should say, nor hearts) to attend other things. I blame none for conscientious and necessary diligence in their worldly Employments, but for that over-diligence and over-doing in them, which plainly speaks their preferring a Private Interest before the Publick; and their own Conveniencies before God's Service. This argues a narrow contracted Spirit, and no less low and base than the former; when self takes the upper hand of Christ; worldly Business puts a baffle upon Duty, and some little trifling Gain supercedes the greatest Work.

4. Lastly, Some are *stately*: their figure in the world, their degree, their wealth, either (in their apprehension) makes Duty cease to be Duty, or disobligeth them from doing it. Men in *high places* will not look so *low* as God's House, *Nehem.* 3. 5. *The nobles of Tekoa put not their necks to the work of their Lord.*

Lord. They are too proud to stoop to so mean a thing. God's Work is not good enough for Noblemen, Gentlemen, Rich Men: let the poor Commoners, Tradesmen and Mechanicks look to it, greater Persons must mind greater things; Zeal for God is below their quality. Thus they act as if they were too great to be good; as if God in advancing them above their Neighbours, had lifted them above being his Servants, or given them a dispensation for being negligent ones.

2. What is to be said of them who instead of being Benefactors to God's House, are *injurious to it, and do it hurt instead of good?* Some such may be in the House, some out of it, but both mischievous to it.

1. Some *discourage the Builders, or the Labourers,* that would do good for the House; would repair it, hew Stones, and lay them in the Building, or would cleanse and purge it; either would convert mens Souls, or reform their Manners, or correct their Vices. Discourage them they do that scoff at them, as *Sanballat* and *Tobiah* did at the building the Walls of *Jerusalem,* Nehem. 4. 2. *What do these feeble Jews,* &c? And *ver.* 4. *Even if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.* They discourage them too that with hold their Assistance, will not help on the Work, by their Purses, by their Countenance, by their Power, Civil or Ecclesiastical, in punishing Offenders, or censuring Scandals: And so do they that any way seek to hinder them; whether by misrepresenting their Work, reproaching them for it, or scaring them from it, *Nehemiah* 6. 6.

2. Others *defile* the House, with their impure and filthy Conversations. So do the Covetous, the Unrighteous, the Licentious, the Unclean, the Profane, &c. They defile God's holy things, by touching them with their unholy hands; they profane God's Sabbaths, pollute his Ordinances; drunk one day, and at a Sacrament the next; and with the same foul mouths one while eating and drinking at the Lord's Table, another while gutling and swilling, or pouring out Oaths and Execrations. Whoso observes the Abominations of many, might be ready to think that verified in God's *Jerusalem,* which was said

of

of mystical *Babylon*, Rev. 18. 2. that it were *become a cage of unclean and hateful birds.*

3. Others *rob* it. I do not mean of temporal Riches and Revenues, (tho such a robbing there may be, when they that *wait at the altar, are not partakers with the altar*; and they that *preach the gospel, are not allowed to live of the gospel*, 1 Cor. 9. 13, 14. so this *Chapter, ver.* 10, 11, 12. and *Mal.* 3. 8.) but of the sacred and precious Utensils of God's spiritual Temple, the Ordinances of Divine Worship; some rob it of one, some of another; some of singing Psalms, some of Sacraments, some of Discipline. Papists add Ordinances of their own devising, others reject those which are of God's Institution.

4. Others *set it on fire*, by fierce and furious Contentions. How often hath either a blind, or intemperate, and ill-governed Zeal set God's House on a flame, and been like to consume it, while the Enemies have warmed themselves at the unhappy Fire? How violently did Judaizing Christians contend in the Primitive Times for the antiquated Ceremonies of the Law of *Moses*, and others afterward about the Observation of a Day not appointed of God, when Pope *Victor* excommunicated the Eastern Churches for dissenting from him about it? How vehement sometimes have Contentions been about a Novelty, a Nicety, a School Notion, a Theological Criticism, perhaps something undeterminable by any present light or wisdom the best of men have arrived at; or it may be some Ceremony or Mode of Worship, or Circumstance of Government very remote from the Heart and Vitals of Religion? How often do the sinful Lusts which remain in the Hearts even of Good Men, (like the mix'd multitude encreasing the Armies of *Israel*, Exod. 12. 38.) insinuate themselves into, and mingle with their Zeal, and enflame it beyond its due bounds; so that what was good and laudable in its first occasion and rise, yet is but too impure in its progress, when the Flesh sets in and joins with it Pride, Passion, Prejudice, &c? It is seldom seen, especially in Contentions about things not fundamental, that all that is really Zeal which bears that name; and it is as seldom seen, but that if the Fire of Contention do not (Divine Providence over-ruling) consume God's House, or make it *too hot* for those that are within

in it, yet it doth so *foil and blacken it*, that it appears less beautiful to those that are without, and gives no encouragement to them to come into it.

5. Others (what in them lieth) *beat down the House*; they batter and bombard the walls, seek its destruction by all the Force and Fury, the Rage and Cruelty their own malice, or the Devil's spite can put them upon. Thus did the Heathen Emperors in the first Three Centuries, then for some time the *Arrian*, and through several later Ages Antichristian Powers. With what Rapine and Violence, with what Wars and Bloodshed hath the Christian world been fill'd? How many Instruments of Battery and Ruin have Satan's Engineers contrived and used, and in some places are still using, for the breaking down this House, and laying it desolate?

6. Lastly, Others *undermine*, and fain would blow it up. Their language is, Psal. 137. 7. *Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation thereof.* Such are Atheists, Deists, Hereticks, Arrians, Socinians, Papists, and all those that bring in damnable Errors, or contra-fundamental Doctrines, if not in their tendency destructive to the very Being of a God, and a Providence, yet to the Person, Offices, Sacrifice or Grace of Christ.

Use 2. By way of Exhortation: You that are Friends to God's House, and Children in it, when you hear what grounds of encouragement you have to be active for its good, how acceptable your service will be to the Lord of the House, what remains, but that you be persuaded and prevailed with, to bestir your selves in so good a Work, and lay out your selves according to your Calls and Opportunities in promoting it. Say to them that laugh you to scorn, and despise you for your Zeal and forwardness, as *Nehemiah* did to *Sanballat*, &c. *Chap.* 2. 20. *The God of heaven he will prosper us, therefore we his servants will arise and build.*

Obj. If you say, Building God's House is a great Work, the Work of Magistrates and Ministers that have Authority and Commission to build, let them look to it, what have we private Christians to do with it?

Ans.

Anſ. It belongs even to private Chriſtians in their reſpective Capacities to do good for God's Houſe, one way or other; ſuch, as you heard, are recorded in Scripture for what they did, Women as well as Men. *Hannah lent her ſon to the Lord*, 1 Sam. 1. 28. *Bathſheba* inſtructed *Solomon*, *Prov.* 31. 1. *Lois* and *Eunice* taught *Timothy*, who afterward proved ſo conſiderable a Builder, 2 *Tim.* 1. 5. and 3. 15. *Aquila* and his Wife *Priſcilla* tutored eloquent *Apollos*, and *expounded to him the way of the Lord more perfectly*, Acts 18. 26. When godly Parents educate their Children *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, Ephel. 6. 4. they are either preparing Stones for the Building, or it may be Builders for the Houſe. Tho private Chriſtians cannot do ſo much as others, yet ſomething they may do, and therefore ſomething they ſhould. Though you cannot build God's Houſe by way of Office and Authority, yet can you do nothing Fraternally, and by way of Charity? If you cannot build, as not having Commiſſion nor Gifts, yet can you not bring Stones to the Builders? If you may not preach the Word, yet may you not perſuade others to hear? And may you not privately inſtruct, exhort, admoniſh, reprove your Families, Relations, Friends and Neighbours? Sure you may; and you may moreover encourage the Builders, not only by bringing Materials to them, but by ſupporting them in their Work; what with your Prayers, (you may ſay to them, as was wont to be ſaid to the Harveſters, *Pſal.* 129. 8. *The bleſſing of the Lord be upon you, we bleſs you in the name of the Lord*;) and what with your Purſes: ſo indeed you may help not only the Builders, but your Fellow-labourers. When you cannot build, you may help by bearing Burdens, and ridding away Rubbiſh. God will accept of leſſer Offerings for the ſervice of his Tabernacle, where men are not capable of preſenting greater. He reſpects more the ſincerity and willingneſs of the heart, than the greatneſs either of the gift or giver; and where *gold*, *precious ſtones*, *purple* and *ſcarlet* are not to be had, *goats-hair* and *ram-skins* will not be rejected, *Exod.* 35. Conſider here, that

1. The *ſad* and *deplorable Condition of God's Houſe* in this Land, requires all hands to the Work. Not only the decay of powerful Religion, the cooling of Zeal, the backſliding of

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Profeſſors, but the increaſe of Scandals and growth of all Abominations among us, Uncleanneſs, Drunkenneſs, Sabbath-breaking, Swearing, Curſing, *&c.* calls for the help of all, high and low, Magiſtrates and Subjects, Miniſters and People, that can do any thing, to have compaſſion on us, and help us. Was ever poor *England* ſo overflown with Wickedneſs? Was ever Prophaneneſs ſo rampant, ſo triumphant, as this day it is? Was it ever ſo faſhionable, ſo creditable, ſo recommended to Imitation, by the Converſation and Example of thoſe that ſhould puniſh and ſuppreſs it? Did ever Old *Sodom*, or doth New *Babylon* outdo us? when in ſome Companies he is ſcarce counted a *Man*, that will not make himſelf a *Beaſt*; nor a man of *Senſe*, that is not an *Atheiſt*; and we are even vying with thoſe that look on *Fools* and *Chriſtians* as convertible terms. What was ſaid long ſince, may well be ſaid at this time, that conſidering the horrid Lewdneſs and Prophaneneſs of the Age, the *Lyconians*, (*Acts* 14. 11.) did they now live, and ſee what we ſee every day, would certainly change their language, and ſay not, *That the Gods are come down to us, but Devils come up among us in the likeneſs of men.* And indeed where *Damnation* is ſo much in mens mouths, it cannot but be judged that at the leaſt there is an *Hell* in their hearts. What ſhall I ſay, Sirs? Are we Proteſtants? Are we a Reformed People, and can we forbear mourning and lamenting over theſe things? Nay, are we Chriſtians? Do we believe God's Bible? Have we Souls to ſave, and Poſterity to care for, and can we forbear helping to the utmoſt of our power? Have we Laws to ſecure our Religion in the Truth of it, and guard it in its Practice? Have we Magiſtrates to execute thoſe Laws, and ſhall we not complain, cry out and implore their aſſiſtance againſt thoſe Sins which threaten us all, our Religion, our State, our Nation, with utter Ruine and Deſtruction? Alas! that we ſhould live like Heathens under a Proteſtant King, Proteſtant Laws, and Proteſtant Magiſtrates; that we ſhould have overcome Popery, and be vanquiſhed by Debauchery; have driven away the *falſe Prophets*, and yet ſtill be poſſeſſed with the *unclean Spirit*, *Zech.* 13. 2.

Object. If you ſay, Such as theſe are not in God's Houſe, nor parts of it; no Members of the Church, and what have we to do *to judge them that are without?* 1 Cor. 5. 12.

Anſw. Whether they be Members or not, I diſpute not: But,

1. If they are Members, they are *rotten ones*, and ought to be cut off; dead Branches, and ſhould be taken away. If they be Stones in the Houſe of God, the *Leproſy* is in them, and they ſhould be pluck'd out, (as in the caſe of material houſes, *Lev.* 14. 40.) and it belongs to the Governors of God's Houſe to do this; it did ſo under the Old Teſtament; the Prieſts were to make a difference between the clean and the unclean, *Lev.* 10. 10. and 14. 44, 46. and it doth ſo under the New; to the Angels of the Churches, *Rev.* 2. 2. The Angel of the Church of *Epheſus* is commended, for that he could not *bear them that were evil*; and the Angel of the Church of *Thyatira* is taxed for *ſuffering that woman Jezabel, to teach and ſeduce God's ſervants to commit fornication*, &c. Chap. ver. 20.

2. If they are not parts of God's Houſe, not Members of his Church, they are *Enemies to it*; and then it is incumbent on Magiſtrates (who are, tho not ſpiritual Rulers in the Houſe, yet Guardians of it) to puniſh, reſtrain, ſuppreſs them: But be they of God's Houſe or not, many take them to be ſo, becauſe they pretend to be of it, have been baptized in Chriſt's Name, profeſs themſelves to be Proteſtants; and it is a diſhonour to the Houſe to have ſuch thought to belong to it: ſure I am they are too near it, and evil Neighbours to it, and no better than a Dunghil before its doors, and ſo a Nuſance to the Maſter of the Houſe, and the whole of his Family.

2. Conſider, That doing good for God's Houſe, is *the greateſt and moſt excellent Work* you can ever be employed in; it is the carrying on that Work, the foundation of which was laid in the Blood of the Son of God; and ſo far as you engage in it, you are *helpers together with him*, 1 Cor. 3. 9. doing the ſame Work in your places and ſtations which he did, and ſtill is doing. What was the great Work he came into the world

to

to do, but the ſalvation of the Church, which you are helping on in all the good you do for it?

3 You can never *ſhew your love to God in any thing more*, than in doing good for his Houſe; and your Zeal for that, is a great evidence of your love to himſelf. Chriſt judges of mens affection to him, by their deportment to his members, *Mat.* 25. Your love to God is then right, when conformed to his; placed where he is placed; you love thoſe whom he loves; but above all things in the world he loves his Church beſt. He hath *choſen Zion*, he hath *deſired it for his habitation, that is his reſt, there he dwells*, Pſalm 132. 13, 14. I pray, what can you do for God himſelf? If you *be righteous, what do you give him*, or *what receiveth he at your hand?* Job 35. 7. Only *your righteouſneſs may profit the ſon of man*, v. 8. Your *goodneſs extends not to him, but to the ſaints that are in the earth*, Pſalm 16 3. God cannot be advantaged by all you do, only men may be bettered. And this is true love to him, when for his ſake you do all the good you can for thoſe (things or perſons) which have a peculiar relation to him.

4. You may reſt ſecure of *God's aſſiſtance* in doing good for his Houſe. He never gives a command, but he gives a promiſe too of Grace and Strength for the keeping of it. Where he calls for Duty, he gives Ability. You muſt expect difficulties in this Work, and oppoſition from Satan, and his Inſtruments. He will never ſuffer God's Houſe to go up, if he can keep it down. He that ſo induſtriouſly ſeeks the ruin of it, will labour all he can to hinder its Building. But be that as it may, you, I am ſure, may comfortably promiſe your ſelves the help of God in it, when he himſelf promiſes it. What he promiſed to *Joſhua*, when about to lead *Iſrael* into *Canaan*, *Joſhua* 1. 5. the Apoſtle applies to private Believers in the Common Affairs of this Life, *Heb.* 13. 5. And ſure then you may apply it to your ſelves in the much greater concernments of God's Houſe, that he will *never leave you, nor forſake you*. And generally what promiſes of Aſſiſtance and Succeſs were made to God's Servants formerly in doing his Work, are applicable to you, or any other gracious Perſons in doing the like, 1 Chron. 28. 20. and 2 Chron. 19. 11. *Deal courageouſly, and the Lord ſhall be with the good.*

5. What good you do for God's Houſe, will in the event redound to your ſelves, who will ſeveral ways reap the benefit of it.

1. Sometimes in your *preſent Thriving and Proſperity.* Many an *Obed-Edom* you know, hath been bleſſed for entertaining the Ark. Many an *Obadiah* for hiding the Lord's Prophets. God promiſes to bleſs his Servants in the things of this Life, when they do their Duty in the things of his Houſe, *Prov.* 3. 9, 10. and a particular Inſtance you have of it, *Haggai* 2. 19. from *this day* (the day in which the foundation of the Temple was laid, *v.* 18.) *will I bleſs you.* As on the other ſide, he blaſts Men's labours in their Secular Affairs, when the things of his Houſe are neglected, *Haggai* 1. 6, 9, 10, 11. How much indeed might this be for the good of the Nation in general? How would a flouriſhing Religion make a flouriſhing Kingdom, and doing Juſtice upon Sinners, bring Peace to the Land? When *Achan* is puniſhed, *Iſrael* proſpers, *Joſhua* 8. When *Saul*'s Sons *are hanged up unto the Lord*, the Famine ceaſes, 2 *Sam.* 21 6. And when *Phineas executes judgment*, *the plague is ſtayed*, Pſalm 106. 30. How little ſhould we fear our Enemies abroad, could we but conquer our Vices at home? Alas! our Sins ſet an edge on their Arms, put courage into their Hearts, defeat our Deſigns, and hinder our Victories. No wonder we cannot prevail over men, when we are fighting againſt God, and make him our Enemy, from whom we expect our Succeſs. The Kingdoms of *Iſrael* and *Judah* never proſpered more, than under Reforming Kings, when Religion proſpered moſt. I doubt not, but (according to God's uſual method in former Ages) it will be a truth to the end of the World, that no Kingdom, nor State, will ever fare the worſe for the Churches faring well in it.

2. In the *honour you will get by it.* 1 Sam. 2. 30. They *that honour God*, *them God will honour*: And honour him you do, when (contrary to thoſe I mentioned before) you ſubordinate your private Affairs to the more weighty and momentous Concerns of his Houſe. God is to this day honouring thoſe that did good for his Houſe ſome thouſands of years ago; and tho your Names be not chronicled in Scripture, yet he hath other ways

ways of putting Honour upon you. It is indeed an Honour to you, that he is pleased to make use of you in his Work; an Honour to have the thanks of God's Church at present, and to have Posterity hereafter call you Blessed. If it be an Honour to be *born* in *Zion*, *Psalm* 87. 5. to be private Believers; what is it then to be Benefactors to *Zion*, to repair her Breaches, cleanse away her Filthiness, or succour her against her Enemies?

3. In *the Comfort* you will have in it. *Hezekiah*'s Sincerity was his Comfort upon a Sick-bed, *Isaiah* 38. 3. he had been a great Reformer, and his Zeal and Activeness for God was a great and illustrious Evidence of his Sincerity. It will be a sweet Reflection, when you are going to *the house appointed for all living*, to think that you have not been altogether useless in the World, but that God hath enabled you by his Grace to be in your several Capacities helpful in setting forward his Work, and doing good for his House. *David*, tho a great King, yet highly valued the place of a Door-keeper in the Tabernacle, *Psalm* 84. I dare say, the meanest Office in God's House, or Work about it, performed with faithfulness, will one day afford you more Comfort than you can find in the greatest Estate, or highest Preferment, or worldly Grandeur you might ever attain to. And if you think your Place or Station, your Parts, Gifts, Graces, are not so considerable as any way to *adorn* it, yet it will be a comfort to you if you have but help'd to *sweep* it.

4. In the *Reward* you may expect; for if God accepts Service, you may be assured he will reward it, when acceptance at present is always in order to recompence at last. If you *abound in the work of the Lord* (whatever that work be) *your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*, 1 Cor. 15. 58. You will be to Eternity reaping the fruit of it, and enjoying the work of your hands; nor will ever fully know how kindly God takes your Service here below, till you be received into his Kingdom above. That Worthy Person, on the Occasion of whose Decease I have been speaking, and you hearing, is, I doubt not, entered into his Master's Joy, as having been faithful in the Improvement of the Talents entrusted with him. Do

you

you be alike faithful in improving yours, that when your day shall come, you may follow him. May the same Spirit of Holy Love, Christian Courage, and Activeness for God, rest upon you, with which he was clothed while among you. Shake off sloth, lay aside private respects, deny your selves, get large hearts for God, and Zeal for his Glory, and you need not doubt of all you can desire, acceptance, assistance, and recompence, 1 Chron. 22. 16. *Arise, and be doing, and the Lord be with you.*

F I N I S.